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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage January 28 on the Taiwan government's plan to raise the National Health Insurance premiums; on President Ma Ying-jeou's transit in San Francisco en route to Honduras; on developments in cross-Strait relations; and on the year-end city and county magistrates' elections. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a front-page news story with the headline reading "With Police Cars Clearing the Way and [Guards] Carrying Guns to Protect [Him], Ma Enjoys the Head-of-State Level of Courtesy Treatment [in San Francisco]."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed possible U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and concluded that "unless Ma Ying-jeou proactively changes his policy, the United States will not disregard Taiwan." A column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed three issues that may possibly trigger clashes between the United States and China -- U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, President Barack Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama, and the appreciation of the Renminbi -- and said Obama has been acting carefully not to step on the red line drawn by China. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed Google's recent threat to quit China. The article said "we have seen mounting support from the U.S. government and European countries,...in the end, however, the biggest force behind China's liberalization will come from within." A separate "Taipei Times" op-ed criticized a commentary recently published by the pro-unification, Chinese-language "United Daily News," which incorrectly suggested the United States' "imperialistic machinations" in Haiti. The article argued that "there was no evil plot by the US military" in Haiti. End summary.

A) "[U.S.] Arms Sales to Taiwan Is No News"

Columnist Antonio Chiang wrote in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 530,000] (1/28):

"[The news that] the United States is about to announce its arms sales to Taiwan has been reported and spread around more than once now, and it is no news any more. Beijing has repeatedly expressed serious concerns [over the issue]. But since it is a matter related to the United States' global strategy, Washington's commitment to return to Asia will become a fantasy if it decides to yield on the matter. During his visit to mainland China, [U.S. President Barack] Obama did not mention a word about democracy and human rights, and instead, he was susceptible to flattery from Beijing. Chinese leaders believe they are standing on an equal footing with the United States now and the two [countries] can rule the world together. China's momentum rose sharply [all of a sudden], and the theory of a 'Chinese model' also came into vogue. China is not just rising but is also throwing its weight around now."

"When Obama returned to the United States, he immediately received the prime minister of India in an unprecedented way in a tent at the White House. His intention was crystal clear -- he wants to maintain a balance between U.S.-China relations and U.S.-India relations. Shortly afterwards, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

visited India, and both sides had a high-sounding talk about a U.S.-India cooperation agreement. Obama has gradually returned to the old route [taken by former President] George W. Bush diplomatically -- namely, the United States is returning to Asia, with Japan, India and Australia as the nucleus [of its foreign relations in the region].

"In the wake of the Google incident, [Secretary of State] Hillary Clinton has openly integrated 'Internet freedom' into the framework of U.S. foreign policy, a move tantamount to announcing [the United States'] new human rights policy, which is intended to step on China's sore spot. It has been several decades since Washington started to provide weapons to Taiwan. The military [balance] in the Taiwan Strait has been constantly tipped in favor of China, while [U.S.] arms sales [to Taiwan] merely provide fundamental defense needs, which are inadequate for [Taiwan] to protect itself or enable [the island] to attack [China]. What need is there for China to make a fuss about it and push its luck? Beijing's purpose is to test Obama's bottom line. Obama may not be very experienced in foreign affairs, but he has many old hands [helping to] handle his Asian policy, and these people have an in-depth understanding of cross-Strait issues. Unless Ma Ying-jeou proactively changes his policy, the United States will not disregard Taiwan. ..."

B) "U.S.-China Conflicts -- Avoiding Stepping on the Red Line"

The "International Lookout" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] wrote (1/28):

"According to the media in general, it is inevitable that big clashes will break out between the United States and China and that Obama is facing a big test in terms of his China policy. [The media] also questioned if Obama has been acting too rashly in his

decision-making [process]? But it is said that Obama [actually] has not been acting rashly at all; many of his decisions have been made after thorough and profound deliberations in an attempt not to step on China's 'red line' and also to be able to manifest Washington's tough attitude. And his goal? To boost his domestic approval ratings, of course!

"It is likely that Obama will have clashes with China in at least three aspects: the [U.S.] arms sales to Taiwan, meeting with the Dalai Lama, and the question regarding whether the Renminbi should appreciate. As for the matter of Internet [freedom], since it is an indirect clash, it can be big or small. Google is merely a bargaining chip, which can be used or dumped aside. In terms of [U.S.] arms sales to Taiwan, Obama believes he can hold his ground [on the matter] because he is acting in accordance with the [U.S.] domestic law, and because the arms sale [package] was agreed upon by the previous Bush administration. He believes that it is the F16 C/D fighter jets and submarines that he needs to pay attention to, which can also be viewed as China's 'red line.' China's recent lambasting about the sale of 'Patriot' missiles to Taiwan was actually a move to stop the United States from selling fighter jets and submarines [to the island], and as long as [Washington] avoids stepping on the red line, there should not be any problem carrying out the current arms sales [package].

"Regarding the meeting with the Dalai Lama, this matter must have been within China's estimation for quite some time. Obama has already been 'friendly' enough by having procrastinated on the meeting for so long. The Sino-U.S. joint statement released during Obama's visit to Beijing also formally acknowledged that Tibet is an indivisible part of China -- a move that was sufficient to make Beijing understand his position. ... Exercising pressure on Beijing to push the Renminbi to appreciate is a flexible policy of Obama; it is all right to do it even though Washington knows clearly that it won't work, but it will be even better if Washington is able to earn some concessions [from China]. ... In terms of the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and the meeting with Dalai Lama, it is up to Washington to decide what it should do. But when it comes to the appreciation of the Renminbi, there is no way [Washington] can put forth its efforts unilaterally to make it happen; all it can do is simply make a show of its tough attitude."

C) "Challenging Censorship in China"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (1/28):

"Google should be commended for its courage in standing up against Big Brother in China after announcing its plan to stop censoring search results on its google.cn platform -- a condition imposed on the US Internet giant when it entered the Chinese market in 2006. Two weeks have passed, however, and Google has yet to end censorship on its platform. This tells us that it remains caught between its business interests in China and the universal principle of Internet freedom it should stand for. ..."

Google, therefore, should stop prevaricating and put an end to the censorship of search results in China -- unless it has a backup plan that guarantees it can 'go around' China's efforts to censor the Internet, as Microsoft founder Bill Gates proposed on Tuesday.

"The ultimate outcome, though, could be ugly: Should it refuse to go along with Beijing's conditions, the search engine could be forced out of the market. If this happened, China would only have itself to blame, and it is hard to believe that the breakup would last very long. ... In the Google case, we have seen mounting support from the US government and European countries, which should stick to their guns until changes in China follow. In the end, however, the biggest force behind China's liberalization will come from within. ..."

D) "'UDN' Sees an Evil US Plot in Haiti"

"Taipei Times" Editor J. Michael Cole noted in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (1/28):

"In a commentary on Jan. 19 on the role of the US in relief efforts in quake-devastated Haiti, the Chinese-language United Daily News went on the offensive on what it claimed were signs of US imperialistic machinations in the impoverished country. ... Nowhere in the commentary does the author ask who could, or should, ensure security and order in Haiti, a country with a long history of political instability and warlordism. The only other military presence in the country with enough knowledge of the place to make a difference in ensuring the safety of humanitarian delivery is Canada, which is already overstretched in Afghanistan and could not deploy anything nearly as sizable -- and as rapidly -- as the US. No country in the region, not even the Chinese UN contingent, has the means to do this, period. ..."

"The author chose to look at the deployment through the prism of politics rather than as necessary action that undoubtedly saved hundreds, if not thousands, of lives. The US was a natural leader to deal with the aftermath of this catastrophe, and it has substantial experience operating in the ever-unstable Haiti that goes back to at least former US president George H.W. Bush. ... What prompted the US into action then was not imperial designs on the Western hemisphere's poorest country, but rather fear of domestic instability and a humanitarian crisis as thousands of Haitian boat people sought refuge in the US. ..."

"As for denying some aircraft to land at the airport in Port-au-Prince, many reports show that the airport is far too small to accommodate the sudden increase in traffic, and many countries (not just France) have had to reroute their deliveries to neighboring Dominican Republic, whence humanitarian goods are transported by land across the border. Unlike what UDN alleges, there was no evil plot by the US military to seize the airport. The article's criticism of the US prioritizing the evacuation of Americans in Haiti is also unfair. It is the responsibility of every government to ensure the safe passage of their citizens in emergencies. France did that in Rwanda in 1994, for example, just as close to 1 million Rwandan Tutsis were about to be exterminated, and many countries did the same when Israel invaded Lebanon in 2006."

"The parallel with CNN polls, meanwhile, is just risible. Since when does CNN represent 'the view of the US,' as the piece argues? ... This commentary is strident anti-Americanism of the type that conservative Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) members, as well as Beijing, will likely exploit to widen the rift between Taipei and Washington. It should be noted that the English version of the commentary, which sounds ominously like something that would appear in the Beijing-controlled People's Daily, was carried on the

official KMT Web site."

STANTON